From: Sheldon
To: Microsoft ATR
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Subject: Microsoft

I am writing this to provide my comments on the Microsoft antitrust settlement. I have been involved in the Computer Industry for overfifty years. I have lived through the emergence and transition of the Personal Computer. I have seen companies come and go. Do we want to go back to the days of different, non compatible Operating Systems and hardware? Microsoft has provided us all with aneasy to use, integrated, and most of all a standard. Microsoft became a monopoly by default. Let us look at the PersonalComputer marketplace after IBM introduced their machine in 1981. Some of the PC's were offered by Cromemco, Vector, Altair, Radio Shack, Atari, andCommodore. Each had its own proprietary hardware, and used non-standard forms of the CP/M Operating System. You chose a platformbased on what software was available for it, unless you were a software designer. If you purchased a Cromemco computer, for example, the word processingsoftware that was offered did not necessarily work on the Vector machine. There were no standards that allowed software to work ondifferent platforms and operating systems. Do we want to go back to this? This would not be in the best interest of the consumer, nor the industry. The IBM PC changed this by providing an open architecture, where anyone could build equipment that would work with the IBM PC. Anyone could build a video card, a memory card etc. that could be installed into the IBM PC. What IBM did not allow was for others to use their BIOS. This meant you couldn't build your own IBM PC. It wasn't until Compaq reverse engineered the BIOS that the Personal Computer market took off. Now others could produce an IBM compatible PC. We may ask why did the IBM PC create such a stir. I think it was VisiCalc for the IBM PC, the Spreadsheet that was available on the Apple as well as theIBM name. This spreadsheet is what businesses were waiting for.Shortly after this we began to see other software appearing. Ashton Tate's dBase, which became the de facto database. VisiCalc later tobecome 123 the de facto standard spreadsheet, and WordPerfect and WordStar the two giants of word processing software. These companieswere monopolies in their own right.Then Microsoft introduced Windows as the Operating System for the PC. None of the major players either recognized its impact or didn't wishto invest in it. Microsoft introduced Word for Windows, the first Graphical User Interface (GUI) word processor, and Excel the first GUIspreadsheet for the IBM compatible PC. None of the other giants produced GUI products with the ease of use and functionality that theMicrosoft products provided, until it was too late. Both business and consumers eagerly accepted, and benefited from the innovation introduced by Microsoft.There were no competing Operating Systems offered by anyone. IBM tried with their OS2 which might have been of interest to engineers but itdid not appeal to the majority of users. At this time Microsoft did not have a monopoly in anything. By providing what the market wantedthey came to dominate the OS, and Office application fields. They became an OS monopoly and an Office software powerhouse. The othersfailed to innovate and compete. Also in this time frame there was Novell who dominated the PC network world. Microsoft introducedWindows NT followed by Windows 2000 and because of its features, ease of use and relatively low price supplanted Novell as the network OS ofchoice. Of course there were the variations of UNIX but this was not the choice for the PC platform.Now we see losers, who didn't innovate and understand how to compete, asking the Government to punish Microsoft for being successful. AOLTime-Warner would like to have the monopoly on Instant Messenger. They are crying foul that Microsoft is again being innovative andintegrating their Instant
Messenger into the Operating System. Sun Microsystems has had years to come up with an OS that would beinexpensive, and have numerous compatible software applications that work on the PC. They haven't done it. Yet they cry foul, decryingMicrosoft's success. They and others tried to champion the Network Computer which did not use Microsoft Windows. The world did not beat apath to their

doorway. Linux was supposed to be answer to those who wanted out of the Microsoft OS world. What happened? Its sales seem tobe mainly to a few. Compaq is no longer installing it on their computers for a lack of demand. Why is this? It is not easy to use,has many problems, is really not able to work across many platforms and lacks sufficient applications that most consumers want. It is notinnovative or competitive. Is this Microsoft's fault?The Courts have found that Microsoft used its monopoly illegally. For this they should be punished. The punishment should be such as to consider its affect on consumers and the industry. The punishment shouldn't be one that prevents Microsoft from innovating and creating products that areeasier for us to use. It shouldn't punish a company for its success. Those who are jealous of Microsoft would have Microsoft punished for its success. Is this what you want?

Sincerely,

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